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INDEPENDENCE
KANSAS

DECEMBER 2016

CITY HALL NEWS



With relations between law officers and citizens under an intense national spotlight these days, Independence Police Chief Jerry Harrison is redoubling his department's efforts to proactively build bridges with the local community.

Under Chief Harrison's guidance, the IPD is implementing a multi-pronged approach to community oriented policing. The overriding objectives are to enhance diversity sensitivity, track and trend key policing data and increase community engagement with the department.

"Really, what it's all about is involving the community in *its* police department," Harrison said.

He explained the department has several tools at its disposal:

DIVERSITY UNDERSTANDING

Within the state of Kansas, police departments are required to maintain policies and personnel training designed to prevent racial profiling. In Independence, Chief Harrison and Captain Lisa Helkenberg have taken their commitment a step further to become involved in the local Diversity Task Force. Harrison serves as a member of the task force, while Helkenberg serves on the organization's community relations committee.

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Community oriented policing is a two-way street

(Continued from Page 1)

"Working with the Diversity Task Force has been a very effective way to help open lines of communication," Harrison said. "Being a newcomer to Independence, I've learned a lot from the task force about the makeup of our community, and some great ideas have been generated about how to adapt our policing approach."

TRACKING & TRENDING

While the state of Kansas mandates certain education and policies, Harrison said, only one other department in the state has implemented a comprehensive "bias-based policing" program with a multi-faceted approach. One such component is the "Fair and Impartial Policing" initiative, which IPD implemented in September. This program offers training related to "implicit bias" (bias that an individual may possess without even recognizing it), as well as a mechanism for tracking and trending police work in the field.

Bias-based policing is used to document all encounters initiated by officers - such as traffic stops, arrests and encounters initiated by the School Resource Officer - and to collect information about the demographics of citizens involved in those situations. The objective, Harrison said, is to identify any noteworthy trends related to officer interaction with minority individuals.

He noted officers are required to track 27 different data points during each encounter, including the citizen's age, race, gender and ethnicity, the reason for the stop, the officer's actions and the outcome. As an agency, IPD tracks instances of vehicle searches and use of force, and any citizen

complaints about officers received through the department also are documented as part of the program.

The data can be reviewed in aggregate at the department level, or broken down to examine the practices of individual officers, he explained.

Harrison said that while the bias-based policing program captures thorough data,

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Therefore, he is not relying solely on statistics to help determine improvements needed in the department but plans to go straight to the community for input. Next on his agenda is the development of a citizens' advisory committee that will also help review bias-based policing complaints and serve as the voice of the community.

"I will be looking for students, business leaders, blue-collar workers, people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds," Harrison said. "We want to have as many different voices in the room as possible so that we can learn about the priorities of each population in our community."

"The citizens' advisory committee will add to the body of knowledge we have and bring in important perspectives to help us understand the community's needs."

Harrison hopes to have the citizens' advisory group assembled and working within the next six months. He is in the process of developing an application for advisory group participation, but citizens with an interest in serving are welcome to contact him via email:

jerryh@independenceks.gov

Harrison believes more intimately involving community members in the work of IPD is

the right thing to do for many reasons, not just to benefit the department with good ideas, but to reinforce to the community - to taxpayers - that the department is working in their best interest.

"Our objective is to give a voice to as many people as we can and to have transparency about what we are doing with the public's money and the public's trust."



SRO BRO: IPD Officer Dustin Stafford is assigned as the School Resource Officer for USD 446. Not only is he a positive and reassuring presence on campus in his daily interaction with students, but he goes above and beyond to build mutually respectful relationships and serves as a mentor to the kids. Sophomore Alexis Mitchell (standing) and Junior Maddie Mitchell are two members of Stafford's "guitar club," which he leads outside of school hours.

the statistical significance of the information is still a bit questionable. This is due to the fact certain police encounters, like vehicle searches and complaints against officers, are rather few and far between in our small community.

"We have such small numbers in some of our reports, that we can't yet draw statistically accurate conclusions," Harrison said.

Calendar...

December 2

First Friday

7:30 a.m. - Independence Civic Center
Monthly community update co-hosted by the City and Independence Chamber of Commerce.
Sponsor: Independence Community Chest

December 3

Recycling Collection Day

8 a.m.-12 noon
City Sanitation Yard, 21st & Maple



AIRPORT ABUZZ WITH NEW ACTIVITY



The aviation industry continues to flourish in Independence, with the recent addition of two new companies and facility improvements at the City's Municipal Airport.

Mike Conway, consultant and former supervisor of Engineering Services for the City, explained the current project includes reconstruction of the T-hangar taxi lanes, and an upgrade is planned for the Automated Weather Observation System (AWOS) used by pilots to track local weather conditions with their mobile devices.

According to Conway, these features and several past projects to improve runways and taxiways help keep our small airport highly favored by incoming pilots and companies using the facilities.

"Considering the size of airport we have and its location, we've gotten a lot of 'wow' comments from pilots," he said.

The airport offers two active runways: a main runway which is 5,501 feet long and a crosswind runway that is 3,402 feet long. It also features an automated lighting system which can be activated remotely by pilots to allow for landings and takeoffs at any time day or night.

Independence City Manager Micky Webb explained the airport's features, as well as ample available land for growth, have been advantageous for business recruitment, including the original landing of Cessna Aircraft Company/Textron Aviation in 1996.

More recently, two new small companies have launched operations at the airport in support of Textron's business. "Departures" is an international company with a local branch providing aircraft cleaning and detailing services. Similarly, Kelly Aerospace has established a local operation that installs custom aircraft finishes according to customers' requests.

"Our airport is certainly contributing to local economic development," Webb said, noting that he recently had opportunity to meet out of town with another international aviation-related company looking for a location in our area.

"We hope to get the company here for a site visit to show them what all Independence has to offer and encourage them to locate here."



EVERYTHING FITS!

Finishing touches are nearly complete on the 8,000-square-foot apparatus bay constructed to house the City's ambulances, fire trucks and other important Fire/EMS equipment on the campus of temporary City Hall at 811 W. Laurel. The metal building is heated and secured and offers enough space to house all emergency response vehicles in one location.



Calendar...

December 8 & 19

City Commission Meetings

5:30 p.m.

Veterans Room/Memorial Hall

Open to the community.

December 26

City Hall Closed

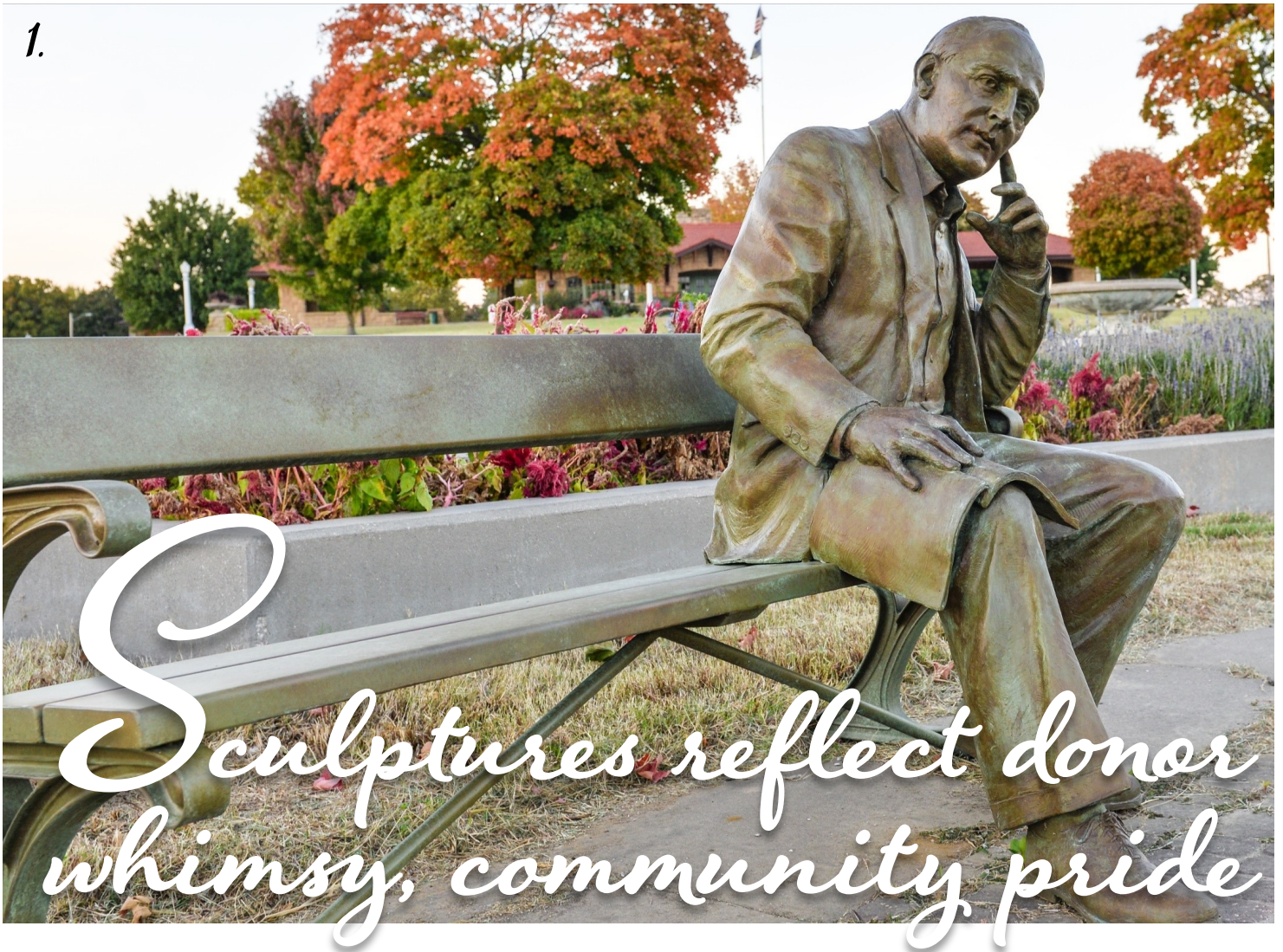
for Christmas holiday observation

January 2

City Hall Closed

for New Year's Day
holiday observation

1.



If a picture is worth a thousand words, than certainly the more than 30 donated bronze sculptures gracing Independence speak volumes about the community pride dwelling in our small town.

According to records compiled by Tim Emert, chairman of the original Downtown Cultural Advisory Board, the trend of "philanthropy through sculpture" dates as far back as 1952, when the Boy Scouts of America donated the Statue of Liberty replica that stands in front of Memorial Hall. (That particular piece was rededicated by former President Gerald Ford and the Independence Police Reserve Unit upon Ford's visit to Independence in February 1984.)

It was perhaps a gesture of condolences in 1970 that reignited the practice, when friends of longtime resident Lucille "Lucy" Gibson Thompson donated a sculpture in honor of Lucy's only daughter, Irene Gibson, who was killed in an accident at the age of 25. The memorial sculpture, titled "Symbolic of Flight," resides inside Independence Middle School, where Lucy was a teacher.

Later, it was Lucy herself who took up the torch and is

credited with starting the modern-day sculpture movement with her first donation - the "Field of Blue" boy-holding-flag statue that now stands at the entrance of the Independence Civic Center. This sculpture, and many more to come, also were dedicated to the memory of Lucy's daughter.

Emert, longtime local attorney who manages Lucy's trust, has facilitated each of her sculpture bequests, both during her lifetime and since her passing in 2011.

"Lucy never said it, but I know it is true...Because of her daughter's death at a young age, the fact that she never had any grandchildren and because she was a school teacher, she was particularly drawn to sculptures of kids and young adults," he said.

While Lucy and her trust are responsible for most of the donations, other individuals, families and organizations have followed suit to pay tribute to loved ones, local celebrities and Independence culture with gifts of sculpture and statuary.

"A lot of the sculptures are memorials to someone," Emert said. "Others are just a matter of what struck the donor's



fancy.”

Some are patriotic, like the Liberty statue and “Field of Blue”; some evoke sadness, such as two pieces erected behind Jefferson School to honor beloved educators taken too early in life; and some are expressions of joy and whimsy, like the “Summer Showers” trio depicting children in a water fight at the Riverside Park train depot.

Regardless of the motivation, Emert said, the donated sculptures - as well as the downtown corner clocks, also donated by Lucy’s trust - have been well respected by the community, noting that vandalism has not been a significant problem over the years.

“I’m not sure if it counts as vandalism, but one cold, snowy winter day, we did find some of our bronze children downtown had been outfitted with socks, hats and scarves,” he said.

Most of the sculptures, Emert said, require limited maintenance with the exception of a couple of annual coats of wax, and Lucy’s trust has provided funding for ongoing maintenance or necessary repair. Just recently, he noted, the downtown clocks were briefly removed for a fresh

painting and spruce up. Emert credited the City of Independence for assisting with the removal and reinstall of the clocks and for the occasional assistance of preparing concrete bases for new sculptures or pieces being moved.

“I’ve sort of been dubbed the ‘sculpture guy,’ but it’s really a community effort and, I think, a nice reflection of civic pride,” he said.

SCULPTURE KEY, PAGES 4 & 5:

1. William Inge at Logan Fountain/Riverside Park, donated by Lucy Gibson Thompson Trust.
- 2-4. “Puttin’ Along” at Independence Country Club; “Bella 8 1/2” at Nees Field bell tower at Independence Middle School; and “Field of Blue” at the Independence Civic Center, all donated by Lucy Gibson Thompson in memory of daughter Irene Gibson.
5. Located behind Jefferson School, in memory of longtime librarian Debbie Tinchler.
6. Also located behind Jefferson School, in memory of longtime elementary teacher Tina Renee Layton Schicke.

Photos courtesy of Rob Morgan.

by the numbers

157

The collective number of years City department directors have served this community:

- **Terry Lybarger**
36 years
Water/Sewer
Department Director
- **Barb Beurskens**
35 years
Park & Zoo Director
- **David Cowan**
30 years
Public Safety Director
- **Mike Passauer**
27 years
Public Works Director
- **Kelly Passauer**
27 years
Assistant City Manager
- **Jennifer Rutledge**
1 year
City Clerk/
Finance Director
- **Jerry Harrison**
8 months
Police Chief



1,627 The number of calls received in the Independence Police Department Dispatch Center through the new NG (Next Generation) 911 system in its first six weeks of operation. The system went live September 29 at temporary City Hall.

The **RECORD** number of recyclers who turned out for the monthly collection day on November 5.

192

As a reminder, recycling is scheduled the first Saturday of each month from 8 a.m. to 12 noon at the City Sanitation Yard, 21st & Maple.

Visit the Independence Chamber of Commerce website for information on what items are recyclable:
indkschamber.org/m/events/home

Calendar...

January 6

First Friday

7:30 a.m.- Civic Center
Monthly community update
co-hosted by the City and Chamber
Sponsor: Accessible Home Health

January 7

Recycling Collection Day

8 a.m.-12 noon
City Sanitation Yard, 21st & Maple



January 12 & 26

City Commission Meetings

5:30 p.m. - Veterans Room/
Memorial Hall
Open to the community.

Application deadline December 12

Grant dollars available to support commercial building improvements



A newly developed grant program is available to assist downtown building owners with necessary property repairs, but the deadline for application is quickly approaching.

The Central Business District Commercial Building Grant will offer qualifying building owners matching funds for 25 percent of costs associated with approved structural and exterior improvements.

The grant program applies to all commercial buildings located in the city's designated Central Business District (C3 zone), and the application period will run through December 12.

The Independence City Commission has approved \$100,000 of current City funding, as well as an additional \$100,000 in the 2017 budget, to aid building owners in bringing their properties into compliance with the city's new minimum maintenance standards ordinance, which will take effect

January 1.

April Nutt, Independence Housing Authority director, is assisting the City with coordination of the grant program.

"This is a special and timely opportunity for commercial property owners," Nutt said. "We learned through the recent professional inspection services offered by the City that most buildings in our business district are well maintained. However, they all are aging, and many could use some TLC to keep them safe and structurally sound."

Nutt explained the grant funding will match only actual dollars associated with "hard" costs of building improvements, such as repairs to foundations, floors, roofs, load-bearing walls, windows and exterior brick. "Sweat equity" will not qualify as a property owner's share of the investment, she noted. Additional requirements under the program include maintaining sufficient property insurance

coverage and proof of paid taxes; submitting repair plans in advance of any improvement work; and advance approval of repair plans by the Independence Historical Preservation and Resource Commission.

"While there may be a few necessary 'hoops' to jump through, we've worked hard to develop a fairly simple process for grant application, and our staff will help applicants navigate each step," Nutt said.

Once the application deadline closes, a grant review committee will be formed to finalize the awards, which Nutt expects to be announced in early February 2017. Grant applications are available at temporary City Hall, 811 W. Laurel (second floor) and also on the City's website, www.independencesks.gov.

More information also is available by contacting Nutt at **620-332-2536**.

Calendar...

February 3

First Friday

7:30 a.m.- Civic Center

Co-hosted by the City and Chamber

Sponsor: Yerkes & Michels

February 4

Recycling Collection Day

8 a.m.-12 noon

City Sanitation Yard, 21st & Maple



February 9 & 23

City Commission Meetings

5:30 p.m.

Veterans Room/Memorial Hall

Open to the community.



City of Independence
811 W. Laurel
Independence, KS 67301

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

MICT/FFI (Paramedic):

\$768.88 per 56-hour work week;
benefits.

Firefighter I/EMT:

\$618.80 per 56-hour work week;
benefits.

Applications are accepted at:

Kansas Works, 317 N. Penn
620-332-5904

www.southeastkansasworks.com

www.kansasworks.com

Don't miss these Hometown Holiday Events

Friday, December 2

6 p.m.

Holiday Festival
Independence Public Library
220 E. Maple

Saturday, December 3

8 a.m.-2 p.m.

Women for Independence
Holiday Arts & Crafts Fair
Wesley Center
8th & Maple

Saturday, December 3

8 a.m.-2 p.m.

Arts & Crafts Show
Independence Historical
Museum & Arts Center

Saturday, December 3

4 p.m.-7 p.m.

Christmas in the Park
Riverside Park Shelter House
Visit Santa & Mrs. Claus

Sunday, December 4

12:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m.

ESA Beta Rho
Christmas Home Tour
Tours:
Andrews - 324 E. Locust
Cooke - 201 S. 4th
McCambridge - 3014 Regency
Shaver - 1403 Birdie Drive
Upper Cut Boxing - 410 E. Main
Soup Lunch - 12 p.m.-1:30 p.m.
Wesley Center

Sunday, December 4

2 p.m.

ICC Choir/Band
Holiday Concert
William Inge Theater

December 21-January 4

USD 446 Winter Break

Saturday, December 31

8:30 p.m.-1 a.m.

Independence
Community Chest
New Year's Eve Gala
Booth Hotel
Live music: Signal Twenty Nine
Tickets: Ane Mae's, Magnolia
Scents by Design, Sayers Ace
Hardware, or call **331-1010**.